DO YOU FALL IN THE BELOW CAMP? - "WE HAVE LOADS OF DATA. WE JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH IT."

You're not alone. In fact, having too much data and too little value is fast becoming the biggest silent problem in boardrooms today. Data is collected everywhere but most of it sits untouched or underutilised.

Why Doesn't the Data Deliver?

Because having data isn't the same as **having a data strategy.** And most businesses are flying blind without one.

Here's what's usually happening under the surface:

- Data is trapped in silos, not shared or structured well. Marketing has data. Sales has data. Ops have data. None of it talks to each other. Sales is chasing new business leads while Customer Success is flagging churn risks from those same accounts. But they're not even aware of each other's activity
- No one knows which data is valuable (and what's noise). We've got 400 reports a week… and we're still guessing. Endless meetings spent debating numbers instead of acting on them
- Leaders haven't been given a commercial view of what data could be worth. We're sitting on a goldmine—but we've never had it valued
- There's no clear link between data and business objectives. Data is managed as a technical project, not a commercial lever. Execs want pricing optimisation while data team is fixing Power BI charts
- Data team stuck in service mode instead of acting as strategic advisors

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What's the Strategic Fix?

STEP 1. Start with Business Value, Not Data

We flip the conversation:

Instead of "What data do we have?" ask **"What business problem are we trying to solve?"**

Examples:

- Do you want to improve customer retention?
- Increase productivity?
- Reduce acquisition costs?
- Find new revenue opportunities?

Once the *commercial goal* is clear, ask:

"What data helps us answer that question?"

That's where value starts, with **intentional, focused use cases.**

STEP 2. Map Your "Data Supply Chain"

Audit the full journey:

- Which relevant data do you hold for the Use Case identified
- Where your data comes from
- Who touches it
- How clean or complete it is
- And where it's going to die (probably in a spreadsheet)

This helps uncover:

- Redundant or duplicated data
- Broken pipelines or manual processes
- Valuable data that's not being captured at all

STEP 3. Build Your "Minimum Viable Data Stack"

You don't need to spend millions on platforms. You need **the right tools to deliver value quickly.**

Start with a **lean, outcome-driven data stack**:

- Light analytics layers
- Smart dashboards for decision-makers
- Agile data teams (not IT empires)

STEP 4. Assign a Commercial Owner to Data

Here's the uncomfortable truth: **If no one in your C-suite owns the commercial performance of data, it won't perform.**

Define a **Data Value Role** — whether it's your COO, a Chief Data & AI Officer, or a cross-functional working group, someone must own the pipeline from **data → insight → decision → result.**

No more "data is everyone's job," which usually means it's nobody's job.

STEP 5. Monetise (Directly or Indirectly)

Once data is structured around outcomes, explore:

- Where you can automate decisions
- What insights can increase sales, reduce cost, or mitigate risk
- Whether there's **external market value** (e.g. benchmarking, licensing, partner APIs)

Illustrative Example of how a logistics and warehousing company can follow this process

Challenge: “We’ve got loads of data, but no idea what to do with it. We’re flying blind on profitability per customer.”

The Business Problem

The board had a nagging suspicion: “Some of our biggest clients might actually be our least profitable ones.”

The issue? No one could prove it. Finance had revenue data, operations had fulfilment costs, and sales had discounting info, but nothing was connected. Every team was looking at a different part of the elephant.

Step 1: Start With Business Value

Core business question: “Which customers are profitable, and which are costing us more than they bring in?”

Use Case: Customer profitability analysis, based on full-margin contribution.

Step 2: Map the Data Supply Chain

Trace the data journey from:

- Sales CRM → pricing & discount data
- ERP system → warehousing & fulfilment costs
- Finance system → invoicing, payment terms, returns

Data pain points

- Each team had useful data — but stored in different formats
- No cost allocation for fulfilment per customer
- Manual Excel reports used for end-of-month decision-making
- Some clients were getting VIP service… and losing the company money

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Step 3: Build the Minimum Viable Data Stack

Rather than a big platform rollout, focus on speed to insight

- Merged 3 core datasets into a lightweight data model
- Built a simple dashboard showing profit per customer, not just revenue
- Created a “red flag” view showing low-margin accounts
- Delivered in 6 weeks

Step 4: Assign a Commercial Owner to Data

Make CMO the exec sponsor from use case to insight to action. They championed the insights at board level and created accountability for how the data would be used in sales planning and pricing strategy.

Step 5: Monetise — Indirectly & Directly

Armed with new insight, the team:

- Could reprice 8 low-margin accounts to bring them back to breakeven
- Identified 3 accounts for upsell into more profitable service tiers
- Adjusted warehouse handling costs in future contract proposals

What these changes could deliver:

- Annual margin improvement
- Less firefighting, more focus on the right customers
- A renewed board-level interest in data as a business tool — not a cost centre

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The Lesson?

You don't need a data lake or a team of PhDs. Just need a clear commercial goal, clean data flow, and a simple delivery mechanism to make better decisions.

In Summary, what You Should Be Asking in the Boardroom:

- What's one business problem we can solve with the data we already have?
- What are our main pain points and how can data help solve it
- What % of our decisions are data-informed today?
- Where is data slowing us down vs speeding us up?
